

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended) A method of transacting a sealed bid competition over the Internet, comprising the steps of:

providing a buyer that is intending to purchase by a sealed bid competition with computer-implemented means for originating a "request for bid" communication that includes bid data as well as a parameter of deadline;

providing a plurality of vendors with access to the "request for bid" communication by means of the Internet;

providing those vendors which choose to respond by the deadline with computer-implemented means for responding with "response" communications containing substantive content presumptively responsive to the "request for bid" communication;

providing the buyer with access to the "response" communications by means of the Internet including the substantive content thereof, without computer-implemented restraint thereto and without buyer's discretion being subject to the control of any other party. whereby the buyer's voluntary restraint is relied upon to assure buyer doesn't access the substantive content until some time determined from the deadline;

providing the buyer with computer-implemented means for originating an informal message and utilities for broadcast transmission of, during the time period between origination of the "request for bid" communication and accessing the substantive content of any vendor's "response" communication, such informal message to all of the plurality of vendors whose respective contact data was known or otherwise supplied to the buyer previous to the instance of the broadcast transmission; and

providing a deadline-integrity log process such that either the buyer is precluded from access to at least the substantive content of the "response" communications until the lapse of some time determined from the deadline or the buyer's activity with accessing at least the substantive content of the "response" communications is logged so that such log record can thereafter disclose if the buyer voluntarily restrained itself from accessing at least the substantive content of the "response" communications until the lapse of the some time determined from the deadline [;]]

whereby the integrity of the sealed bid competition as transacted over the Internet is upheld at least in part by said deadline integrity process.

2. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein:

the deadline-integrity log process comprises providing an intermediary Internet resource to which the responding vendors commit the "response" communications, such that the intermediary Internet resource can either (i) preclude the buyer's access to at least the substantive content of the "response" communications until the lapse of some time determined from the deadline or (ii) log the buyer's activity with at least the substantive content of the "response" communications so that such log record can thereafter disclose if the buyer voluntarily restrained itself from accessing at least the substantive content of the "response" communications until the lapse of some time determined from the deadline.

3. (original) The method of claim 2, wherein:

the intermediary Internet resource comprises one or more Internet sites.

4. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein:

the computer-implemented means for responding includes encrypting the "response" communications such that decryption requires access to a specific decryption key; and

the deadline-integrity log process comprises providing a trusted party with said specific decryption key, such that said trusted party can either (i) preclude the buyer's access to said specific decryption key until the lapse of some time determined from the deadline or (ii) log the buyer's activity with said specific decryption key so that such log record can thereafter disclose if the buyer voluntarily restrained itself from accessing said specific decryption key until the lapse of some time determined from the deadline.

5. (currently amended) The method of claim [[1]] 4, wherein:

the trusted party comprises an intermediary Internet resource, which may include one or more Internet sites.

6. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein:
the computer-implemented means for responding includes encoding or compressing the "response" communications such that decoding or decompressing requires access to a specific decoding or decompressing object; and

the deadline-integrity log process comprises providing a trusted party with said decoding or decompressing object, such that said trusted party can either (i) preclude the buyer's access to said decoding or decompressing object until the lapse of some time determined from the deadline or (ii) log the buyer's activity with said decoding or decompressing object so that such log record can thereafter disclose if the buyer voluntarily restrained itself from accessing said decoding or decompressing object until the lapse of some time determined from the deadline.

7. (original) The method of claim 6, wherein:
decoding or decompressing objects can comprise any of passwords, algorithms, or hyper-link branches to an Internet address.

8. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein:
wherein the log record is committed to machines of the buyer's at the instance(s) of the buyer's accessing activities with respect to the "response" communications such that the log record is undesirably vulnerable to unauthorized deletion, corruption or other manipulation.

9. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein:
the "request for bid" communication is contained in one or more web pages.

10. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein:
the lapse of some time determined from the deadline means a time concurrent with or later than the deadline.

11 through 21. (canceled)